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HEARTINESS
IN
PUBLIC WORSHIP.

BY
A London Churchwarden.

“O LORD, OPEN THOU OUR LIPS :
AND OUR MOUTH SHALL SHEW FORTH THY PRAISE.”

Tenth Thousand, Revised.

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Heartiness in Public Worship.

SUFFER me as a fellow-Churchman to say a few words on a subject which I cannot but think is one of great importance; namely, the desirableness of *every one* taking a part in the Church Service, audibly—distinctly—reverently.

An essential feature of our “Book of Common Prayer” is its RESPONSIVENESS. It provides that a considerable portion shall be said alternately by Minister and People. And that there may be no hesitation or uncertain sound on the part of the people, it directs at almost every change, that they “shall answer with a *loud voice*.” And, again, that there may be no ground for timidity, as well as to provide against any singularity, it enjoins that all present—“The Minister, Clerks, and People”—shall say together, the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, and other portions. In this respect the English Liturgy is framed according to the pattern of those early Liturgies which have existed from Apostolic times. It is an historical fact, recorded both by Pagan writers

and Christian Apologists, that the Primitive Christians met together for the purpose of singing Hymns of Praise to Christ as God,* and that the Heathen were even attracted to the Churches by the singing, for the sound of their Chanting rolled from side to side like the waves of the Sea; and their Amens were said to resemble claps of thunder.† Both comparisons shew the heartiness of their singing and responding. The arrangement of frequent response, and oft recurring Amens, besides having the authority of Scripture, and the precedent of the Church's practice in all times, has also been always thought to possess many advantages, united with great beauty, and to be altogether the best and most certain means by which "the great Congregation may unite with one heart and one soul, with one mind and one mouth, to glorify God."

Now, it is evident that if the people do not take up *their* part in a prompt, decided, outspoken, hearty manner, the distinguishing feature of this kind of service is destroyed; its beauty marred; and its several advantages lost: to say nothing of the *unreasonableness* of expecting him that ministereth, to go through such a one-sided,

* Pliny's Letter to Trajan.

† St. Jerome, quoted in Bingham's *Antiquities of the Christian Church*.

unequal performance, with energy, warmth, and devotion: while there are many among the Congregation possessed of as much physical strength, and power of voice as himself, who yet refrain from helping him; whereas he would most certainly feel sustained and encouraged by a manly participation and response. A Layman may with propriety draw special attention to the disheartening and chilling effect which a mute and statue-like demeanour must have upon the Clergy in particular. It used to be the fashion, as it still is, especially among Dissenters, to complain of a want of earnestness and devotion on the part of many of the Clergy. A dry formality was supposed to be characteristic of Members of the Church, both Clergy and Laity. And it must be confessed that there was some ground for the charge. The people were lukewarm, and the Clergy were therefore discouraged. For do we not influence each other in the Church as well as in the World. And so now in our own day, what can we expect to be the natural result, if when *we* hear the invitation from the Minister, "Praise ye the Lord," we seem as though we heard not, or else respond in a tone so weak, and in a manner so listless, that it can at best be taken but as a quiet assent for politeness' sake?

It is not necessary now-a-days to point out

the absurdity of what has been called the "Duet service between the Parson and the Clerk." A pompously-slow, declamatory utterance on the part of the Minister, was frequently contrasted by a hurried, nasal response from the Clerk, the tone and manner of which made it almost impossible for the People to unite with him, and also as a consequence prevented them from taking their part "with one mind and one mouth." This manner of "performing Divine Service" satisfied an age of religious inactivity and coldness; but in truth, as the usual expression implied, the people were merely "*present* at Public Worship." Possibly this "duet" was only to be heard to perfection in the Churches of our large towns. Instances are still to be seen in many of the London Churches of the arrangement which placed the *people's substitute*, (or, "Amen Clerk," as he was commonly called,) in an enclosure with his face towards the people; immediately above him rose the "Reading Desk;" while the Pulpit, towering superior to all, and hiding from view the Communion Table, led the people to look up to *hearing* as the beginning and the end—the all-in-all—of their public service.

Another style followed upon this, but which had not in it more of "the beauty of holiness." (1 Chron. xvi. 29.) Now might be heard, from

some upper gallery *behind* the Congregation, the shrill, imperfectly trained voices of "the Charity children," who, with the assistance of the Clerk, produced a painful, though possibly *perfect discord*. Instead of the honorable of the earth devoting the skill which superior training gave them and their children, to the sustaining and making more excellent "the service of Song in the House of the Lord," (1 Chron. vi. 31,) the Hosannas of the Church were mainly left to the children of the poor. The sacrifice of Prayer and Praise was conducted as if the people had no active part to take in it; and no wonder therefore it was felt to be "a weariness." A state of religious indifference was produced like that of which Malachi complained in his days. Anything was regarded as good enough for the service of the Lord's House, and in consequence it became "contemptible." The talented and the wealthy were content to offer unto the Lord that which cost them no just proportion of money or care, for His service was "despised." "But, offer such service now unto thy governor; will *he* be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts." (see Mal. i. 6-13.)

The close of the "Georgian era," pronounced by Macaulay to be the Augustan age of the nation, was nevertheless marked by a spiritual

slumber, and forgetfulness of Church principles and practice on the part of the rulers of the Church—and the “people loved to have it so.” They had no wish to be disturbed from their state of ease and quiet. The faith and love of many waxed cold, and therefore few of the fruits of good works were produced. Happily, however, the night of slumber is fast passing away, and we are awaking to a sense of the overwhelming requirements which are forcing themselves upon our attention on every side; and it may be said that the Church of England *now* “expects that every man will do his duty.”

It is with a hope of enlisting, or else of encouraging, your individual co-operation in the particular duty of joining in common prayer and common praise, “when we assemble and meet together,” that these few words are addressed to you. And, is there not a cause? For, although it is a duty in which almost every person is able to take a part, yet, are there not many among us who act as if they were deaf to all exhortations to prayer and invitations to praise?

Is not such seeming indifference and unconcern both a disgrace and a hindrance to us, individually and collectively? For, is not the apparent coldness and lifeless formality on the part of some, sometimes urged as a re-

proach to the Church itself? Whereas we know that no words of prayer are more fitted to excite devout and warm aspirations towards heavenly things, and that no hymns of praise are more scriptural than are those provided by our Church. Oh, that her members everywhere would but endow them with a living reality and power, by a warm expression of them! If any sight can make "Angels weep," it is surely that of a cold and lifeless service on the part of those for whom Christ died. *Angels* could sing, "Glory to God in the highest," although they participate not in that wondrous redemption which they announced to man; yet *Man* can be mute, even when he professedly comes to "praise the Lord for His goodness, and to declare the wonders He hath wrought for the children of men." But, how much more must the *Holy Spirit* be grieved to behold such apathetic worshippers! What can more effectually restrain the outpouring of the fulness of His gracious influences among us than such cold, heartless service?

Consider the very purpose for which we come together. Is it not expressly for the Public Worship of Almighty God? Then let us not be ashamed to be seen and heard performing this duty. And because we meet for *public* praise and thanksgiving, therefore let us *really*

sing heartily unto the Lord; and when we pray let us not think it beneath our social position or intellectual acquirements, to imitate "the man after God's own heart." He was not only great as a king, and mighty as a warrior, but was accomplished also as a musician, a singer, and a poet. Yet it was he who said, "O come, let us sing heartily unto the Lord—let us fall down and kneel before the Lord our Maker." Before Him, even Angels and Archangels in Heaven veil their faces, and bow down in lowly reverence; shall we then sit, apparently unconcerned, when we worship Him in His courts on earth?

It may now be well to consider some of the circumstances which may be supposed to account for the non-manifestation of devotional feeling, and the absence of visible participation in religious services, complained of. It may be said that the absence of a warm interest may, after all, be only in appearance; that it may result from humility, or retiring diffidence; from a desire to render what is esteemed a more spiritual worship than that which is expressed in outward forms;—in other words, the less form, the more spirit. Or, it may be that, in most cases, the neglect pointed out proceeds from simple inadvertence—the subject never having

specially presented itself for consideration ; and for such apologies as these we are prepared to make every charitable allowance.

Many, however, have no inclination to do anything in the matter. Such persons are probably beyond the range of these remarks ; as are they also who think themselves too refined to join with the multitude, even in "Common Prayer ;" as well as those whose chief concern in attendance at Church a scanty once on the Lord's Day, is mere obedience to a code of respectability which pronounces it to be very proper to go to Church when there is nothing particular to prevent.

Even those persons who are not able to read cannot be excused from joining in such portions as the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Litany, most of the Responses, and all the Amens. Much less can any plea for silence be urged by those who have a voice everywhere but in the House of God. "Is it right that the well trained voice which perhaps has held entranced admiring friends during the week should on Sunday be tuneless and silent as the grave ? "

Others there are, however, who have the wish to do what they see to be a duty, and to them it may be submitted that the silence and retiring reserve which proceeds even from humility may be carried to an extreme ; and also that it is out

of place in the Church, because it results from a misapprehension of the joyful spirit and manner which has ever been the distinguishing characteristic of Divine Worship. We all know that the Psalms are full of exhortations to “sing praises with the whole heart ;” “lustily with a good courage ;” “with a voice to be heard in the Congregation of the Saints ;” “to sing to the harp with a psalm of thanksgiving ;” “with trumpets also and shawms to shew ourselves joyful before the Lord the King.” One instance in which all these various means of praising the Lord were combined, will be enough to show with what evident favour the expression of the inward feelings of the heart by outward means was accepted by the Lord :—

“And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place : also the Levites which were the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, being arrayed in white Linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets : it came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord ; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good ; for his mercy endureth for ever : that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord ; so that the priests could not stand to minister by rea-

son of the cloud : for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God." (2 Chron. v. 11—14.)

The continuous endeavours which have been made from age to age to "make the Lord's praise to be glorious" (Psalm lxvi. 1) in His earthly Temples, are in truth anticipations of that "Alleluia" which shall burst forth in Heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings. (Rev. xix. 5, 6.)

The highest design of Worship is the lifting up of the heart in praise to the Lord who should be the exalted *object* of our adoration. The worship of the Most High attains perhaps its strongest possible expression in the Communion Service, especially where we *thank* Him for His great glory. When in God's House we should, as far as possible, lay aside the emotions which the changing events of our daily life excite within us, that we may there at least fix our thoughts upon an object beyond us and above us. For, if our worship be unduly influenced by our ever-varying feelings, we miss the great advantage of leaving behind us for a season the anxieties and occupations of this present life, and of obtaining a foretaste of Heaven itself. In a word, the Church is not a place for the exercise of private devotion, so much as for Public Prayer and Praise, in common with all who as-

semble with us. It may also be remarked, that in acting according to our individual feeling we lose the very idea contained in the phrase, "*Public Worship.*" Properly viewed, Public Worship consists in the assembling of "the Visible Church of Christ, or Congregation of faithful men," (Art. xix.) for the purpose of General Confession, Prayer for Common wants, and United Praise.

It appears, therefore, to be a positive duty, required by the very nature of things, that in Public Worship our devotion should be *apparent*. And, as it is only by our outward gestures and deeds that others can judge of us, or be influenced by us, surely it is consistent with common sense, manliness, and sincerity, not to hide but to exhibit our religious belief and practice, upon proper occasions. It is but *natural* to do this if, as Christ Himself said, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;" (Luke vi. 45) and it is *necessary* also, if, as St. Paul declares, "with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. x. 9, 10.) "There may, indeed, be the *appearance* of devotion without the reality, but surely it is a misapplication of charity to suppose that there is any devotion where there is no manifestation of reverence whatever."* In fact, a perfect wor-

* Kilner's Congregational Responding.

ship must employ both body and soul—our whole being. To some, such an assertion may appear unnecessary. But, as there are people who hold that silent and invisible worship is the most perfect, is purer, and more heavenly, it is submitted to such whether this inward worship without outward expression may not in some sense be compared to that Faith which is without works, and is pronounced to be dead, being alone. (James ii. 17.)

The following description of Worship in Heaven, given to us by St. John, may be deemed sufficient to determine the propriety of engaging with all our powers of soul and body—our spirit, our understanding, and our voice—in the adoration of the Most High.

“ I heard the voice of many angels—and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a *loud* voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. (Rev. v. 11, 12, 13.)

Again :—

“ A voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a

great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia : For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." (Rev. xix. 5, 6.)

With these sounds ringing in our ears we might well stop. For if the hope and anticipation of joining in the praise of Heaven will not move us to prepare for it by taking part in the *Te Deums*, *Sanctuses*, and *Glorias* of the Church on earth,—what will ?

Supposing every one to give utterance to earnest, hearty Amens and Responses, what a depth of spirit and strength would be brought out of our Common Prayer. Dr. McNeile, speaking in reference to Revivals of Religion, shows that the Prayer Book provides for our use, Sunday after Sunday, petitions suited for the expression of the most earnest and fervent worship. "Imagine," he says, "a prayer-meeting in which the officiating minister, while deprecating a list of evils in this evil world, was interrupted by the whole assembly lifting up their voice with one accord, and saying, 'Good Lord deliver us,' and again and again, 'Good Lord deliver us.' And when he proceeded to enumerate and entreat for blessing after blessing, imagine the whole assembly breaking in upon his petitions, and reiterating, 'We beseech thee to hear us, Good Lord !' "

How painfully distressing and chilling it is to

hear only a few voices in a large Congregation ; but where all unite with one mouth, as well as with one mind, in prayer and praise, our whole heart is stirred within us, we are affected by it, and constrained to join with them. Such audible worship gives us courage, we catch the fervour, we are sustained and helped on, and we leave the Sanctuary feeling that it is indeed the “House of God—the Gate of Heaven.”

Allow me, in conclusion, to say, that the foregoing arguments have been used with a firm belief in their truth and soberness. It is hoped, therefore, they will commend themselves to many sincere and thoughtful minds. It is the writer’s earnest hope that each one who reads this Tract will decide for himself in this matter with the resolution of Joshua, when he said to all the people of Israel, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord ;” and with the determination of the Psalmist, “I will praise the Lord with my whole heart ;” “I will sing unto Him with my tongue ;” “my lips shall praise Him ;” yea, even “in the midst of the congregation will I sing praises unto Him.”

“O God, my heart is ready, my heart is ready : I will sing and give praise with the best member that I have.”



